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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000132

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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS MEETING WITH TURKISH MFA U/S APAKAN --
IRAQ, IRAN, AND SYRIA

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a January 19 meeting in Ankara, Turkish U/S Ertugrul Apakan told U/S Burns that Turkey supports the U.S. strategy of reinforcing Iraq with additional troops. He appealed for U.S. help on the PKK and for a delay in Kirkuk referendum. Apakan expressed concern about Iranian influence in Iraq and Iran's nuclear weapons program. U/S Burns welcomed Turkish support in Iraq, pledged action against the PKK, and said that the issue of Kirkuk is up to the Iraqis. Burns acknowledged that current sanctions imposed on Iran will not be sufficient, discussed other U.S. efforts, and urged the GOT to pass the message to Tehran that the P5 1 offer is still on the table. He challenged the GOT strategy of engagement with Syria, noting that the U.S. provided Syria many chances to change its policies and behavior, and Syria had failed to do so. End summary.

¶2. (C) On January 19, U/S for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns met for two hours in Ankara with MFA U/S Ertugrul Apakan and a senior MFA team composed of Amb. Rafet Akgunay, Deputy U/S for Multilateral Affairs; Amb. Oguz Celikkol, Special Representative for Iraq; Amb. Bokurt Aran, Director General for the Middle East; Amb. Hayati Guven, Director General for Intelligence and Security Affairs; Murat Esenli, Deputy Director General for the Americas; Mustafa Pulat, Advisor to U/S Apakan; Ipek Zeytinoglu, Americas Desk Officer; and Ertugrul Oguzhan, Americas Desk Officer (notetaker). U/S Burns was accompanied by the Ambassador, NEA PDAS James Jeffrey, EUR/SE Director Doug Silliman, P Special Assistant Herro Mustafa, and notetaker.

Iraq

¶3. (C) Turkey supports the President's strategy of strengthening U.S. forces to bolster security in Baghdad and Anbar Province, and it seeks closer cooperation with the U.S. on Iraq, U/S Apakan stressed. Turks particularly appreciated the President's stress on Iraqi unity. He said that Turkey follows with great concern the ethnic violence in Iraq and realizes that a U.S. failure in Iraq will be a failure for Turkey. Turkey has expressed its support for the Maliki government's objectives and shares the U.S. vision for a united, democratic Iraq, at peace with its own people and with its neighbors. Apakan outlined Turkey's goals for Iraq

as: preserving Iraq's territorial unity, establishing political unity, providing law and order, empowering the central government, limiting Iranian influence, resolving the Kirkuk issue, eliminating the PKK threat in northern Iraq, increasing bilateral economic ties, and establishing a broad, positive national agenda in Iraq. Of critical concern for Turkey, Apakan emphasized, is the issue of Iraq's territorial integrity. It should be guaranteed by Iraq's neighbors and by the U.S.

14. (C) Apakan said that Turkey is concerned by the lack of consensus on a national agenda in Iraq. How could the various parties and factions get behind a united national government? He provided a non-paper on reconciliation issues including a proposed conference in Turkey and said that Turkey wants to do what it can to help encourage national reconciliation and the establishment of a positive national agenda in Iraq. Cooperation with the U.S. is essential, Apakan said. Recent consultations with Turkey's ambassadors in the region concluded with the recommendation that the Turkey pursue efforts with the U.S. on Iraq. FM Gul had conveyed this to parliament, and parliament will discuss Iraq in a closed session on January 23.

15. (C) U/S Burns thanked Apakan for Turkey's support for the President's new strategy for Iraq, welcomed deeper cooperation from Turkey, and affirmed strong U.S. support for Iraq's territorial integrity. He said that limiting Iranian influence in Iraq was a key shared objective. Iran clearly does not agree with our vision for Iraq. While the U.S. does not seek a military confrontation with Iran, he underscored, we are pushing back firmly against Iranian intervention in Iraq, noting three recent U.S. operations in which Iranians had been detained. Two aircraft carrier battle groups deployed to the Gulf should send the signal that the U.S.

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will not accept Iran as the region's dominant military power.

The U.S. welcomes Turkey's analysis of the Iranian problem in Iraq and looks forward to working more closely with the GOT on this issue, Burns said. Ambassador emphasized the importance for our common goals for Iraq of the Incirlik Air Base Cargo Hub and the Habur Gate land crossing into Iraq. Protecting and enhancing these connections will help ensure the success of Turkey's Iraq agenda.

Kirkuk

16. (C) The influx of hundreds of thousands of Kurds into Kirkuk had brought about an ethnic confrontation and will make the constitutionally mandated 2007 referendum on the city's status unfair, Apakan told Burns. Kirkuk was a sensitive issue for the Turkish public for both historic and ethnic reasons, he claimed. Turkey's view is not an irridentist one, but rather is motivated by concern about how Kirkuk can affect Iraq's unity and integrity. Efforts to alter the city's status would isolate it and were not in the interest of Iraq's unity. The referendum would unleash further ethnic turmoil. Postponement is the best option. MFA Iraq Coordinator Celikkol claimed that since the consensus requirement under which the referendum must be carried out according to Article 140 of the Constitution would not be met, the referendum could be delayed within the authority of the Constitution.

17. (C) U/S Burns agreed that Kirkuk is very sensitive, said it will at the end of the day be a matter for the Iraqis to decide, and encouraged the GOT to engage in a deeper level of dialogue with GOI on this and other issues. NEA PDAS Jeffrey also stressed the importance of GOT dialogue with the Iraqis and noted that the referendum mechanism was locked into a Constitution that enjoyed a broad degree of support within the country.

Iran

¶18. (C) Apakan stated that Turkey does not want Iran to develop nuclear weapons and seeks to strengthen diplomatic efforts to counter Iran's nuclear program. Key to the success of these efforts is unity among the P5 1. Turkey is implementing UNSCR 1737 sanctions, but urged more discipline and harmony among western countries to make the sanctions more effective. Deputy U/S Akgunay warned that discord among western countries would be taken advantage of by Russia and China, creating further tensions. The GOT has been blunt in its own dialogue with Iran, Apakan said, more so than the Europeans, and has urged Tehran to accept the P5 1 proposal. Iran does not accept the "common sense" approach, yet the GOT believes in the potential effectiveness of repetition of arguments to Iran. Quiet diplomacy is more effective than public statements.

¶19. (C) DG for the Middle East Aran said that Tehran as a revolutionary regime whose primary goal is to maintain its power. Conventional wisdom and linear logic do not apply when dealing with it. The Shi'a base of the revolution has "lost its shine," and ethnic identity within the country is on the rise. The municipal elections last fall reflect the younger generation's desire for change. At the same time, increased visibility and access to power have made the regime more confident, according to Amb. Aran. The effects of UNSCR 1737 on domestic politics have yet to be seen. Ahmadinejad's policies will likely continue. Foreign threats in response to its nuclear program have generally rallied some degree of popular support for the regime and have aided Iran's goal of becoming a regional power. Iran has succeeded in reaching the eastern Mediterranean through Syria and support for Hamas, Aran said.

¶10. (C) U/S Burns welcomed Turkey's engagement on the Iran nuclear issue. Noting he had recently met with European political directors to urge a tougher approach, U/S Burns acknowledged that current sanctions imposed on Iran probably will not be sufficient alone to turn back on Iran's nuclear weapons program. He urged the GOT to pass the message that the P5 1 offer was the most important U.S. diplomatic offer

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made to Tehran since 1979 and that it is still on the table. If Iran fails to seize this opportunity, more pressure will be applied. U.S. efforts to limit Iran's access to the international banking system were proving effective and were damaging to Iran. U/S Burns urged Turkey to support efforts to apply combined pressure on Iran, including efforts to stop Russian arms sales. Ambassador noted discussion on the margins of the December 2006 High Level Defense Group talks in Ankara about having bilateral consultations on the implications of a nuclear armed, missile equipped Iran.

Syria

¶11. (C) Turkey favors active engagement with Syria and considers Syria's relationship with Iran "a marriage of convenience," DG Aran told U/S Burns. Hamas and Hezbollah will lose if Turkey and others are able to draw Syria away from Iran and doing so would be another means to limit Iranian influence in the region. While Turkey understands and shares U.S. concerns about Syrian support for terrorism, the GOT believes that Syria should not be ostracized.

¶12. (C) U/S Burns challenged the GOT strategy of engagement with Syria. He said that the U.S. provided Syria many chances to change its policies and behaviors, and Syria had failed to do so. PDAS Jeffrey added that the U.S. view was there was not much to be gained by engaging Syrians unless they changed their policies, including those regarding Iraq and Lebanon.

PKK

¶13. (C) Apakan urged more U.S. action against the PKK in northern Iraq. The inspection earlier in the week of the Makhmour refugee camp was helpful, but only a first step. The PKK, he said, should not have any doubt about U.S. resolve. Apakan welcomed the efforts of General Ralston and said that there were high expectations from the Turkish public.

¶14. (C) U/S Burns affirmed that the PKK issue is of great importance to the U.S. and that Washington understands how serious the threat is to Turkey. The U.S. is carefully considering concrete actions against the PKK and will be back to the Turks within weeks. Ambassador flagged the significance of the U.S. action at Makhmour. A census should occur shortly, a next step toward the camp's closure. He urged that Turkey proceed to finalize the Tripartite Agreement with UNHCR and Iraq. DG Guven said that Turkey is cautious because of the many unresolved issues regarding the camp and its inhabitants.

¶15. (U) This cable has been cleared by U/S Burns.

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WILSON